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New Buda: A Colony of Hungarian Forty-eighters in Iowa

BÉLA VASSADY

IN HUNGARY, as in much of Europe during the revolutionary years of 1848–49, the intelligentsia battled for cultural revival, national independence, and a republican form of government. The Hungarians, led by Lajos Kossuth, fought to escape the Habsburg yoke and to win constitutional liberties for the Hungarian people. The struggle was short-lived, however. By late 1849 the conservative forces of absolutism had been restored to dominance throughout Europe. The revolutionary intelligentsia—known thereafter as Forty-eighters—were hunted by the police and scattered into exile. To many of these frustrated exiles, the American frontier, with its abundant land and guarantees of individual liberties, was especially alluring.

A chronicler of the Hungarian-American experience, Emil Lengyel, has described some of the Hungarian Forty-eighters who went into American exile after 1849 as “rainbow chasers, Utopians who wanted to build a Hungarian New Jerusalem on the untamed soil of America. Others,” he continued, “were practical people who wanted to live and die as free men, as part of the American way of life.”¹ Still others, Lengyel might have added, were die-hard revolutionaries who hoped to establish colonies in America to organize, with American aid, for the resumption of their battle to liberate their homeland.²

1. Emil Lengyel, *Americans from Hungary* (Philadelphia, 1948), 47.

2. Although the Hungarian Forty-eighters have received little scholarly attention, historians of nineteenth-century German immigration have shown the influential role played by some German Forty-eighters who attempted to
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The leader of the first contingent of these Hungarian exiles to arrive in America in 1849, László Újházi, exhibited all three of these characteristics. Újházi's highly publicized fantasies about building a "New Hungary" on the prairies of mid-America as a replica of the old fatherland, along with the plethora of local fables about "log castles" and aristocratic life-styles in his colony of New Buda in Iowa, have lent themselves to highly romanticized descriptions in both American and Hungarian sources.³ By exploiting sources from both sides of the Atlantic, it is possible to present a more objective analysis of this mid-nineteenth-century ethnic frontier community.

IN THE SUMMER OF 1850 Újházi and a small contingent of his followers established the colony of New Buda in Decatur County, in southern Iowa, close to the Missouri border. Újházi selected this location for several reasons. Iowa had just gained statehood and was being touted as the place to go for those seeking open fertile lands for settlement. Because he sought to avoid slavery but hoped to settle in a moderate climate, he chose Decatur County as the southernmost location he could

establish German ethnic communities in the American West. See, for example, Carl F. Wittke, *Refugees of Revolution: The German Forty-Eighters in America* (Westport, CT, 1970), and Adolf E. Zucker, ed., *The Forty-Eighters: Political Refugees of the German Revolution of 1848* (New York, 1950).

3. For example, see descriptions in the *Des Moines Register*, 16 October 1938 (magazine section), and the *Lamoni Chronicle*, 11 July 1940. The July 1914 issue of the *Nemzeti Újság* (National News) described Kit Carson finding Újházi and his band in the wilderness and leading them to New Buda. For other examples, see Cyrenus Cole, *A History of the People of Iowa* (Cedar Rapids, 1921), 230-31; idem, *Iowa Through the Years* (Iowa City, 1940), 199-200; and Edith Rule and William J. Peterson, *True Tales of Iowa* (Mason City, 1932), 210-13. Some scholarly studies and collections of documents do exist. See Lillian May Wilson, "Some Hungarian Patriots in Iowa," *Iowa Journal of History and Politics* 11 (1913), 479-516; G. P. Arnold, *New Buda and the Hungarians* (Leon, 1911); Tivadar Ács, *New Buda* (Budapest, 1941); Péter Bogáti, *Flamingók Új Budán* (Flamingos at New Buda) (Budapest, 1978); idem, *Édes Polim!* (My dear Poli) (Budapest, 1979); Éva Gál, *László Újházi, a szabadságharc utolsó kormánybiztosa* (László Újházi, The Last Government Commissioner of the War for Independence) (Budapest, 1971). Bogáti's *Poli* and Ács's *New Buda* are collections of letters and diaries. *Poli* provides the correspondence of the Újházi daughters and the diaries of one daughter, Klára. Ács combines in one volume the correspondence, newspaper reports, diaries, etc. relating to the settlers at New Buda.

find in a free state with open lands. Unsurveyed and just made available for settlement, the pristine, empty lands he found there appeared to suit his goals well.⁴

Újházi and his companions may have been surprised to discover that most of the scattered American pioneers they initially met in Decatur County had come with southern sympathies from the slave state of Missouri.⁵ That state of affairs was to change, however. The Hungarians were among the first arrivals in a new wave of pioneer immigrants who were to pour into Iowa during the 1850s. Coming from the American Northeast and from Europe, especially from Germany but also from Ireland, the new settlers would inject fresh elements into Decatur County during the 1850s.⁶ Having fled from the Habsburg Empire, the Hungarians spoke German and felt most comfortable with their German neighbors. To a somewhat lesser degree, they also associated with the Irish settlers and with those they called "Yanko" (Yankee) farmers.⁷ During the first years of their settlement, the Hungarians also noted the continued habitation of the region by the Indians who had recently ceded the territory. The Hungarians reported the Indians to be docile and friendly, and they frequently engaged in trade with them.⁸

For at least a generation after the Hungarians' arrival, many Americans remembered their highly publicized colony and their stubborn old leader, László Újházi. Újházi simultaneously pursued two goals: obtaining Kossuth's release from internment in Turkey, and establishing a colony where Kossuth

4. Decatur County was officially organized 1 April 1850, and the first township was founded in July of the same year. See J. M. Howell and Heman C. Smith, *History of Decatur County, Iowa, and Its People*, 2 vols. (Chicago, 1915), 1:16-18. On Újházi's wish to avoid settlement in a slave state, see Klára Újházi Diary, 30 November 1849, in Bogáti, *Poli*, 34.

5. Howell and Smith, *Decatur County*, 1:35, 49, 54, 2:184-85.

6. Morton M. Rosenberg, *Iowa on the Eve of the Civil War: A Decade of Frontier Politics* (Norman, OK, 1972), 14, 18-19, 26.

7. Perhaps because the Hungarians were unable to speak English at first, they referred to all Americans they met in Decatur County as "Yankos" (Yankees), regardless of their geographic origins or political sympathies.

8. Maythényi to his wife, 11 January 1852, in Acs, *New Buda*, 213; Francis Pulszky and Theresa Pulszky, *White, Red, Black: Sketches of Society in the United States* (London, 1853), 236.

and his destitute companions could find asylum and regain their self-sufficiency while preparing to renew the revolution. By skillfully juxtaposing those twin goals, Újházi was able to engender extensive support from American officials in New York and Washington during the early 1850s. President Zachary Taylor offered his personal support for the permanent settling of the refugees on American soil.⁹ A congressional resolution requested that land "be granted, free of all charges, to the exiles of Hungary already arrived and hereafter to live in the United States."¹⁰ In effect, the free land proposal excluded American citizens from rights to be enjoyed by foreigners. Yet numerous petitions to Congress in favor of the proposal demonstrated continued public sympathy and support. Although Congress postponed action on the land grant question, President Millard Fillmore reassured the Hungarians in 1851 that Congress "will deal generously with the Hungarians who have sacrificed all for independence and freedom," and he ordered the Hungarian lands in Iowa to be reserved from auction until Congress could act on it.¹¹ The same year, a congressional act authorized Kossuth's emigration with the understanding that he and his companions settle permanently in America. This act, together with public statements made by Kossuth in Turkey implying his intention to settle, produced the general expectation among Hungarians and Americans alike that he would join the Hungarians at New Buda, presumably as their governor.¹²

9. Újházi reported to the American people that he and his companions planned to remain in a "united colony" for the purpose of "regenerating" Hungary. See Ladislaus Ujhazy, *A Brief Explanatory Report* (New York, 1850), 17. To Újházi's letter from London about his settlement goals, President Taylor responded by offering a "home" to the freedom fighters. Ács, *New Buda*, 16-17. Copies of the letters appeared in *New York Herald*, 22 December 1849 and 18 January 1850.

10. *Congressional Globe*, 31st Cong., 1st sess., 1850, 128.

11. Order of General Land Office, Washington, DC, to Fairfield Register and Receiver, 7 April 1851, in the *National Era* (Washington, DC), 24 April 1851; Újházi to Fillmore, 8 September 1850, and Fillmore to Újházi, 21 October 1851, in Frank Severance, ed., *Millard Fillmore Papers*, 2 vols. (Buffalo, NY, 1907), 2:316-17.

12. For the Kossuth-Újházi correspondence on settling the Hungarians in America, see Béla Vassady, Jr., "Kossuth and Újházi on Establishing a Colony of Hungarian 48-ers in America, 1849-1852," *Canadian-American Review of Hungarian Studies* 6 (Spring 1979), 21-46.

Under the prevailing squatter system, the Hungarians planned to preempt and use the open congressional lands until they came up for sale. If by that time the Hungarians had not received some or all of the land they occupied as a free gift from Congress, they planned to exercise their right to purchase what they could at \$1.25 per acre when it came up for auction. Especially attractive to Újházi was the opportunity to establish a large, purely ethnic colony in this open territory. He and each of his companions sought a combination of woodlands, meadows, and streams. The congressional lands bisected by the Thompson Fork of the Grand River in Decatur County suited these criteria well. With the generous support of Senator George Jones of Iowa, in the fall of 1850 New Buda was officially made a United States post office with Újházi appointed as its postmaster.¹³ By this act, New Buda received official recognition and thereafter appeared on all official maps of Iowa.¹⁴

"As far as the eye can see," Újházi reported, "I have taken possession of the land." Believing that seventy-five thousand acres would be required to fill the needs of the large, closed colony he envisioned, he preempted approximately 10 percent of that amount for himself (twelve sections, or 7,680 acres) along the Thompson Fork of the Grand River southward from a point approximately four miles north of the Missouri border. Újházi's companions preempted smaller portions of land north and south of his sections, also along the river where possible. The log house Újházi built in 1851, which thereafter served as the post office, was to be the first residence in the new town of New Buda he laid out in 1851.¹⁵

13. Klára Újházi Diary, 21 August 1851, in Bogáti, *Poli*, 94; Bogáti, *Flamingos*, 156.

14. The map Ferenc Varga used to find Újházi in 1851 "pointed out with large letters 'Hungarian Colony—Post Office New Buda.'" See Ferenc Varga, *Varga Ferenc főljegyzései* (Ferenc Varga's Notations), Quant. Hung. 2359, Széchenyi Library, Budapest. For parts of Varga's autobiography, written sometime around 1900, see Ács, *New Buda*, 39-41; Géza Kende, *Magyarok Amerikában* (Hungarians in America), 2 vols. (Cleveland, 1927), 1:147; and *Szabadság* (Liberty), April and December 1900.

15. Újházi to Pulszky, 7 September 1850, in Ács, *New Buda*, 110. The actual amount of land Újházi envisioned for himself and for his colony remains in dispute. Ács, *New Buda*, 36 and 41, mentions ten thousand acres as well as the twelve sections cited here. The amount was more fantasy than reality in

The year 1851 was a time of great optimism in the Hungarian settlement. Újházi's fellow émigrés were responding to his call as he promoted his colony to Hungarians scattered in exile and to those still living in Hungary. He sent circulars describing in exaggerated detail the craftsmen, teachers, and other professionals he planned to bring to New Buda. Despite strict Austrian censorship of letters sent to Hungary by the exiles, their descriptions of the colony and its settlers appeared so regularly in the Hungarian press during 1850 and 1851 that they produced anxiety among Austrian officials. Likewise, the American press so frequently published articles supporting the new colony that Hungarians found themselves questioned about the "Hungarian Colony" everywhere they traveled in the United States.¹⁶

During this period, Újházi's log home more frequently served as a guest house for newcomers than as the prairie homestead it was meant to be. The pattern for newcomers was to borrow the Újházi tent, search for land to preempt, build a cabin or purchase preemption rights to one from a squatter, and, if their funds permitted it, build a proper block house with

any case. Where Újházi laid out his "town" of New Buda likewise remains in question. Some sources suggest it was near Davis City (founded in 1855), located four miles north of the Missouri border on the west bank of the Grand River at the northern edge of present-day New Buda Township. More likely, however, it was near the village of New Buda laid out by Újházi's companions in 1855. New Buda's location is identified on 1875 and 1894 maps as approximately midway between Davis City and the Missouri border one-half mile west of the river. A hand-drawn 1855 map of Decatur County shows the territory between Davis City and New Buda labeled as the "Hungarian Settlement." In contemporary sources this territory was also referred to as the "township of land belonging to the Hungarians." Eventually it came to be called New Buda Township. Bogáti, *Flamingos*, 101. For the 1855 map, see Károly Rác Rónay, "Az amerikai magyar telepek története, IV: New Buda, ahol Kossuth Lajos letelpedését előkészítették" (History of Hungarian Settlements, IV: New Buda, Where They Prepared for Louis Kossuth's Permanent Settlement), *Külföldi Magyarság* (15 April 1922), 9; for the 1875 map, see A. T. Andreas' *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa* (Chicago, 1875), 35; for the 1894 map, see *Plat Book of Decatur County, Iowa* (Philadelphia, 1894), 42.

16. *Pesti Napló* (Pest Journal), 14 December 1850, 7 January, 15 February 1851, in Ács, *New Buda*, 147-51; *Magyar Hírlap*, 22 December 1850. On Austrian reactions, see Charles L. Brace, *Hungary in 1851* (New York, 1852), 274-77; and Dénes Jánossy, *A Kossuth emigráció Angliában és Amerikában* (The Kossuth Emigration in England and America), 2 vols. (Budapest, 1948), 1:956-62.

the help of neighbors.¹⁷ The arrival of Ferenc Varga, József Maythényi, and Ernő Drahos in 1851, and their search for land, was typical. For days Újházi rode around with them on horseback pointing out that the territories from his own land southward to the Missouri border were, "as far as the eye could see, free and open." Because the Hungarians did not understand how their preempted parcels should be subdivided, they simply used natural landmarks, such as existing creeks, as boundaries to divide their "estates" along the river to the Missouri border.¹⁸

New arrivals who did not like anything to the south of Újházi's sections rode northwest to preempt plots or purchase existing Yankee preemption rights at various distances from New Buda in that direction. Indeed, as additional exiles drifted to the Hungarian settlement during 1851, the availability of vast tracts of open lands made it impossible to keep them together in the enclosed ethnic community of Újházi's initial plans. The great size of Újházi's own tract made large distances between himself and his Hungarian neighbors inevitable, as did the desire on the part of most Forty-eighters to acquire a combination of forests, grasses, and waterways on their individual parcels. Hungarian homesteads soon lined both banks of the Grand River north and south of Újházi's homestead, stretching from the Missouri border in the south to several hours ride north of the planned town of New Buda. Émigrés content with small plots were able to settle approximately one-quarter of an hour's ride from Újházi's New Buda.¹⁹ Others, however, often with speculation in mind, sought much larger tracts. Sándor Lukács, for one, arriving soon after Újházi, could

17. Klára Újházi Diary, 20 May, 3 June 1851, in Bogáti, *Poli*, 92-94.

18. Maythényi to his wife, 25 January 1852, in Ács, *New Buda*, 219. Maythényi's land was adjacent to the south of Újházi's plot, divided by Dickens Creek. Varga's was to the south of Maythényi's, also separated by a creek. Drahos's parcel was farthest south.

19. Maythényi placed László Madarász's farm about fifteen miles to the north of New Buda. From Madarász's location southward toward New Buda were the settlements of Szirmay, Farkas, Zsarnay, Katona, Pomutz, and Takács, in that order. See Maythényi to his wife, 20 November 1851, in Ács, *New Buda*, 202. Also see Bogáti, *Flamingos*, 51. For Újházi's description of locations, see *Pesti Napló*, 14 December 1850, in Ács, *New Buda*, 147. For Lukács's November 1850 description, see *Pesti Napló*, 7 January 1851, in Ács, *New Buda*, 149.

not be satisfied until he found an eighteen-thousand-acre tract with the appropriate mixture of grasses, forests, and river—all of which was located a two-and-one-half-hour ride from Újházi. Separating the scattered Hungarian settlers even farther from each other were the twenty-three Yankee, English, and German neighbors who had already established themselves along the river. Such scattering of homesteads was typical of initial frontier settlement patterns, but it prevented the ethnic cohesiveness that Újházi considered essential for keeping the exiles together in preparation for Kossuth's arrival.²⁰

Despite such initial difficulties, Újházi actively continued to pursue his twin goals of bringing Kossuth to America and acquiring free land for the Hungarian settlers. He maintained regular correspondence with the president, key congressmen, and other influential individuals, and continued to receive encouraging responses from them in turn. The Újházi-Kossuth correspondence, while reflecting ambiguity and skepticism on Kossuth's part, often associated the land grant issue with the establishment of an ethnic Hungarian community in the United States after Kossuth's arrival.²¹ Generally, therefore, Újházi's New Buda scheme had widespread support until Kossuth made it clear during his 1851-52 American political tour that he was interested not in settlement but in immediate efforts to renew the revolution in Hungary with American support. That announcement came as a shock and a disappointment to Újházi and his followers. For reasons that will become clear (and which Kossuth himself well understood), however, it is unlikely that a frontier ethnic colony used as a base for renewing the revolution—the guise under which Újházi attempted to sell the

20. *Pesti Napló*, 7 January 1851, in Ács, *New Buda*, 147-51; Bogáti, *Flamingos*, 110. The selling of preemption rights to large parcels of unimproved land to later arrivals was common practice among frontier squatters. See Ray Allen Billington, *Westward Expansion* (New York, 1960), 477. An added incentive for the Hungarians to engage in land speculation was their belief that they would later be granted their lands free by Congress.

21. As late as 21 May 1851, Kossuth suggested that colonization remained a contingency plan and that if he did decide to colonize, it would involve a massive emigration from Europe so as to maintain ethnic purity and avoid assimilation. Vassady, "Kossuth and Újházi," 29, 31-32, 36; Bogáti, *Flamingos*, 164-65.

colonization idea to Kossuth—could have succeeded in any case.

THE NEW BUDA ÉMIGRÉS quickly learned to cooperate and work with each other and with their non-Hungarian neighbors in the wilderness. Because of the intense publicity surrounding the settlement at its inception and again during Kossuth's tour of America, neighboring homesteaders welcomed the Hungarians, offering the traditional neighborly aid in building homes and at other times of mutual need.²² During the more leisurely winter months, the Hungarians visited back and forth with neighbors and attended neighborhood "backwoods balls."²³ And, because the Forty-eighters admired American republicanism and the revolutionary tradition that brought it about, they avidly participated in Fourth of July celebrations with their neighbors, while simultaneously continuing to practice their own traditional Hungarian festivities.²⁴

Despite these positive initial responses to the Forty-eighters, negative reactions were also manifest. Elsewhere in the country during this period, German Forty-eighters were coming under attack from nativists who resented the Germans' radical politics, atheistic religion, clannish resistance to assimilation, and continual promotion of American intervention in

22. Bogáti, *Flamingos*, 129. As late as 1859, József Madarász found the local farmers speaking with great sympathy of Kossuth and the Hungarians. József Madarász, *Emlékirataim, 1834-1881* (Memoirs) (Budapest, 1883), 312. The frontier tradition of helping new settlers clear the ground and build their first log house is described in Pulszky and Pulszky, *White, Red, Black*, 235. Also see Klára Újházi Diary, 30 September and 25 October 1850, in Bogáti, *Poli*, 84-85, for a description of neighborly help in raising the Újházi house and other forms of mutual aid.

23. Pulszky and Pulszky, *White, Red, Black*, 239-40, describe in great detail these balls, which could last twenty hours or more. An even more detailed description is provided by Klára Újházi, who met her future husband, a German peasant, at one of these events. Klára Újházi Diary, 21 August 1851, in Bogáti, *Poli*, 95-107. Also see Bogáti, *Flamingos*, 147-50; and John Xantus, *Letters from North America*, ed. Theodore Schoenman and Helen B. Schoenman (Detroit, 1975), 48-51.

24. Arnold, *New Buda*, 11-12; Howell and Smith, *Decatur County*, 1:164; Maythényi to his wife, 1 January 1852, in Acs, *New Buda*, 215-16. Maythényi described a "disznótör," the traditional slaughtering and dressing of hogs in country households followed by a large feast.

European revolutions. Among Know-Nothing platform goals in the 1850s was the "repeal of Government land grants to unnaturalized foreigners." Such nativist sentiments appeared in Decatur County in the summer of 1851, when "feelings of uneasiness and dissatisfaction" were reported among local homesteaders who resented plans to restrict free land grants to the Hungarians alone.²⁵ The Hungarians' perpetual revolutionary planning sessions at New Buda and their many subscriptions to overseas sources of news may also have led nativists to resent their apparent exclusive interest in European political affairs.²⁶ Likewise, the rationalistic, atheistic sentiments of some of the Forty-eighters at New Buda may have provoked some of their Yankee neighbors.²⁷ Finally, since local politics reflected the proslavery sentiments of settlers who had come north from Missouri before state boundary lines were settled, the antislavery sentiments of the Forty-eighters may also have been an irritant to some.²⁸

The Hungarians' reactions to their neighbors were similarly mixed. They denigrated the Yankee pioneers of Iowa for their lack of breeding and coarse manners, yet admired them for their industry, practicality, and business acumen. Újházi reported his neighbors to be good people, but uneducated,

25. Wittke, *Refugees of Revolution* (Westport, CT, 1970), 178, 184-85; *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 4 February 1852.

26. Howell and Smith, *Decatur County*, 1:2-3, 184-89; *Biographical and Historical Record*, 643-44. Whenever wars broke out involving Austria during the 1850s, there was great excitement among the Hungarians at New Buda. In 1859 they were still planning ways to participate in resuming the Hungarian revolution. Madarász, *Memoirs*, 310-11.

27. Újházi, for example, repeatedly commented on his great mistrust of all clergy. When the visiting governor of Iowa asked where his New Buda church was; he allegedly snapped back, "in Hell." See Xantus, *Letters*, 72. However, his companions do not appear to have shared this sentiment; several of those who remained at New Buda were later reported to be active Protestant churchmen. See Wilson, "Hungarian Patriots," 504.

28. Howell and Smith, *Decatur County*, 1:2-3, 184-89; *Biographical and Historical Record*, 643-44. The Hungarians who acquired citizenship and remained at New Buda all reportedly joined the Republican party, although Decatur County remained predominantly Democratic until after the Civil War. When József Madarász visited New Buda in 1859, he observed strong sectional debates and was chagrined to find that some of the Germans were Democrats supporting slavery. See Madarász, *Memoirs*, 306-7.

uncultivated, and boring company socially. At the same time, when compared to the ignorant peasantry he had known in Hungary, he was surprised to find them literate and knowledgeable about current affairs.²⁹ Sándor Lukács commented that the "American is cold. He speaks little and laughs even less; he minds his own business, and when he works at something he does not understand, he keeps at it until he learns it. All men make their own luck here."³⁰ Many of the Hungarians also noted with surprise the honesty and respect for others' property displayed by their neighbors.³¹ The practical, straightforward approach of the Yankee settlers was brought home to the Újházis in an amusing manner. Soon after the family's arrival a stranger rode up and, without dismounting, proposed marriage to the daughter of the "Hungarian General." Only later was it explained to the Újházis that such proposals were not uncommon in this pioneer wilderness, where men needed women but had little time to squander on the amenities of courtship.³²

The predominantly male Forty-eighters reserved their harshest condemnations for what they perceived as overly lib-

29. *Pesti Napló*, 14 December 1850, in Ács, *New Buda*, 132-33. Also see Maythényi to his wife, 11 April 1852, *ibid.*, 245; and Madarász, *Memoirs*, 310-12. Perhaps Pulszky's impressions best demonstrate the evolution of the Hungarian Forty-eighters' mixed attitudes toward Americans: "First it [the U.S.] made a most agreeable impression on me, everything seemed so youthful, rising, progressive. Later I was somewhat disgusted with the coarseness, the want of refined taste and the materialism of the people. But now after having seen more than half of all the states I must confess I feel the greatest respect for this nation of workers, where the curse of Adam has become a blessing and where idleness is not the distinctive feature of gentlemanship but even if blended with a great fortune, it is always despised." Pulszky to Newman, 25 May 1852, in Jánossy, *Kossuth Emigration*, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 848.

30. *Pesti Napló*, 7 January 1851, in Ács, *New Buda*, 145-47. Like many of his compatriots, Lukács had been a lawyer and was elected as a radical representative to the national Diet. Later, as government commissioner for the city of Győr, he supplied Komárom with food and weapons and thus became acquainted with Újházi. *Ibid.*, 44-45.

31. *Pesti Napló*, 1850, VII, in Ács, *New Buda*, 132-33. Also see Maythényi to his wife, 22 August 1852, *ibid.*, 245. The Hungarians' experiences were not characteristic because local county records speak of many outlaws in the area during the 1850s. Howell and Smith, *Decatur County*, 1:146.

32. Klára Újházi received the proposal and described the backwoodsman's "courting" manners in her diary. Klára Újházi Diary, 3 September 1850, in Bogáti, *Poli*, 79-82. Also see Pulszky and Pulszky, *Red, White, Black*, 234.

eral and indulgent attitudes toward women in America. For example, Lukács opined that American women were "simple minded, indulge in luxuries, are lazy and filthy." American men, he concluded, were "slaves" to their women. "If anyone wants a shock, then I say just this much, let him take for himself as wife an American woman." Maythényi's first impressions verified Lukács's opinion. Referring to his inability to find a servant at New Buda, he wrote, "The American woman becomes a servant only as a last resort, because at home she is indulged by her man with food and clothing, so that she does not work, but just wastes her time away." The generally more solicitous attitude of American men toward women was clearly unacceptable to the Hungarians. Most of those who remained eventually chose German immigrant women for their wives. In the meantime, as with the Americans around them, the shortage of women continued to be a problem for the Hungarian settlers.³³

MANY SETTLERS came to the incipient colony during its first two years, but few remained permanently. This coming and going of settlers makes it difficult to provide a census for the colony. Estimates ranged from approximately one dozen to more than thirty permanent settlers at different points during the first two years of settlement.³⁴ In relative terms, when compared to other small emerging communities on the midwestern frontier at mid-century, it was reasonable to expect New Buda to grow, especially after Kossuth's anticipated arrival. In the fall of 1851, more than one hundred Hungarian émigrés, who had recently arrived in Chicago from Kossuth's place of internment in Turkey, were preparing to be transferred to New Buda. Only after Kossuth refused to give his approval for their transfer did

33. *Pesti Napló*, 7 January 1851, in Ács, *New Buda*, 146-47; Maythényi to his wife, 20 November 1851, *ibid.*, 206. Quarrels broke out over women, as those involving Varga's wife, who, in a community dominated by single males, was pursued by many. Eventually Varga divorced his wife and remarried to a German woman named Mary Sanders (or Zanders). They had seven surviving children. Bogáti, *Flamingos*, 258-60.

34. There were only about 250 Hungarians in the United States at this time, mostly in the cities. Bogáti, *Flamingos*, 109.

the New Buda of Újházi's plans, with its ethnic character and revolutionary goals, begin to fade.³⁵

Who were these émigrés who gathered at New Buda during the years of hope and high expectations in the early 1850s? They were university-trained liberals, republicans, radical romantics; men of social standing and breeding, frequently of gentry roots, who had served as military officers, government officials, or in the legal professions; men charged with treason who were now in exile. Most shared Újházi's radical politics, and had either served with the old man while he was civil commissioner of the Danubian fortress of Komárom (the last fort to capitulate in 1849), or had known him in his earlier capacity as főispán (lord-lieutenant) of Sáros County in northern Hungary.³⁶

The Újházi family was rooted in the tradition of the gentrified lesser nobility of Hungary, powerful in politics and land ownership at the county level. Another of the settlers, Baron József Maythényi, was a magnate with large holdings in Hungary who relinquished his titles in a radical gesture of support for the revolution and was appointed to serve as főispán of Somogy County. Ferenc Varga, a young lawyer who was to remain in the New Buda area until his death in 1902, served as álispan (deputy-lieutenant) of Torontal County during the revolution and presided over the revolutionary tribunal of the city of Szeged. Another settler, László Madarász, had served as minister of police for the revolutionary government until he was forced to resign under a cloud of suspicion involving the disappearance of confiscated jewels that had been entrusted to him. Humiliated by the way he had been treated, he sought and found isolation at New Buda, where he was to live as a recluse

35. An American millionaire was prepared to finance the transfer if Kossuth agreed to it. However, Kossuth decided against the transfer and against New Buda in general because he feared his acceptance would suggest he was wavering in his conviction that the revolution could be resumed immediately. See Vassady, "Kossuth and Újházi," 36.

36. Since Újházi's politics had been to the left of the reformers, he especially welcomed fellow members of the Radical party. In 1849 he had served as president of the Democratic Republican Club, which emerged as the Radical party, advocating not only independence but a democratic republican form of government modeled on the French Revolution. See Bogáti, *Flamingos*, 17.

for six decades. Perhaps the most colorful of the permanent settlers of New Buda was the young lawyer, György Pomutz. Újházi had met Pomutz while the latter served as chief of police at Komárom during the revolution. Described by those who met him as an energetic and optimistic young man who could recite the classics in several languages, he was very well liked by everyone. Ignác Hainer, likewise a lawyer from Hungary who was fluent in several languages, had served as an aid to Kossuth's secretary of state during the revolution. After farming at New Buda for two years, in 1856 he became a language professor at the University of Missouri. The Civil War caused his return to New Buda, where he resumed farming. He died in New Buda in 1900. The youthful Hungarian poet Frigyes Kerényi, a member of the radical leftist student movement formed in Budapest in 1848, lost his estates in Sáros County and decided to join his erstwhile főispán, Újházi, at New Buda. Too sickly and weak of body to work his New Buda farm, he died soon after his arrival in 1851.³⁷

These were the types of men who initially gathered around Újházi at New Buda. Although excelling in the arts of rhetoric and the pen, they had never before turned a spade. Primarily scholars who could quote Homer in Greek or Latin or had expertise at wielding the sword, they could not drive a nail or practice a trade. Those who in the Hungarian aristocratic manner regarded manual labor beneath their dignity and talents were among the first to leave. Most, however, initially remained under the spell of their radical revolutionary principles and made great efforts at what they proudly labeled their "peasant" life-style. They donned work clothing and put their backs to the task. Varga, who had known Újházi at his estates and as főispán, described his initial shock at the sight of the old aristocrat proudly laboring in his "peasant" garb on his homestead. Similarly, József Madarász, who visited his brother László in 1859 at New Buda, marveled at the daily drudgery his brother

37. Kende, *Hungarians*, 1:139, 146, 161-62, 177-78; *Biographical and Historical Record of Ringgold and Decatur Counties, Iowa* (Chicago, 1887), 560-62, 643-44; Howell and Smith, *Decatur County*, 1:51-58, 2:250-55; Wilson, "Hungarian Patriots," 492-95, 502, 507; Arnold, *New Buda*, 5; Xantus, *Letters*, 66-67; Bogáti, *Flamingos*, 118-24.

endured while wearing work clothing instead of a suit. Concluding that there was "more appropriate" work for a "civilized" man than this, the visiting Madarász departed as soon as he could.³⁸

Successful homesteading on the virgin soils of the unpredictable prairies required a combination of money and hard work. Resources for two to three years were needed before one could expect to become self-supporting. In 1850 Újházi estimated that to begin homesteading, one needed a minimum of two to three hundred dollars for building costs and five hundred dollars for animals and supplies.³⁹ Some, like Varga and Újházi, were fortunate enough to arrive with capital, but many were forced to emulate Lukács, who went to St. Louis to work for wages and to learn necessary trades. Others worked for their financially better-off comrades at New Buda to make ends meet. Some succeeded, but only over the long haul, by staying on and working hard. Madarász, for example, despite barely surviving for years, was ultimately able to sell his land for a decent retirement. Hainer also stayed on as a successful farmer at New Buda, as did István Radnich, who won added recognition as a successful home builder in Decatur County.⁴⁰

Despite their best efforts, there were few success stories. The Forty-eighters' experience managing developed estates in Hungary was of little help in breaking prairie soil or in the use of survival techniques until the first crops came in. "Their crude attempts at agriculture," wrote one of their chroniclers, "were sources of amusement to their neighbors."⁴¹ Maythényi complained to his wife that while four Hungarians split 105 fence rails per day, one Yankee by himself could do 100 per day.⁴² Not surprisingly, most of the Forty-eighters became disillusioned after a short stay in New Buda and returned to a more urban

38. Varga, *Notations*, 6; Kende, *Hungarians*, 1:148; Ács, *New Buda*, 50; Madarász, *Memoirs*, 301-4.

39. *Pesti Napló*, 14 December 1850, in Ács, *New Buda*, 135; Maythényi to his wife, 14 February 1851, *ibid.*, 162.

40. Bogáti, *Flamingos*, 150. For detailed descriptions of Hainer, Madarász, Radnich, and Varga, see *Biographical and Historical Record*, 560-62, 643-44, and Howell and Smith, *Decatur County*, 1:53, 2:113-14, 195-96, 253-55.

41. Wilson, "Hungarian Patriots," 516; Arnold, *New Buda*, 12.

42. Maythényi to his wife, 11 January 1852, in Ács, *New Buda*, 213.

environment. Others, still seeking the gentry way of life but wishing to avoid the total isolation of the open wilderness, gathered in the more settled and developed community of Davenport, where a secondary colony of Hungarian farmers developed simultaneously.⁴³

The life of Baron Maythényi exemplifies the process of disillusionment through which many of the settlers passed after their arrival in the colony. Maythényi's early letters to his wife were filled with enthusiasm and excitement about the potential for this new land. However, progressive disillusionment set in as the hard realities of frontier life became manifest and the romance of the "peasant" way of life in the "New Hungary" began to wear thin. He first moved to Davenport, and then, to the dismay of his compatriots who remained at New Buda, he accepted the blanket amnesty offered to the Forty-eighters by the Habsburg government in 1867. Returning to Hungary, he reclaimed the titles and estates he had renounced during the revolution and when he took the oath of American citizenship with his New Buda companions in 1855.⁴⁴

Count Otto Zichy was a similar case. An old Komárom acquaintance of Újházi who had commanded the Győr troops and was among a very few high aristocrats who had supported the revolution, Zichy followed Újházi to New Buda in 1851. He built a house and farmed along the Grand River, but after only one year his aristocratic relatives secured amnesty for him and he returned to reclaim his estates and titles in Hungary.⁴⁵

If the hardships of homesteading contributed to the colonists' failure, so, too, did the conflicting goals of the settlers who came to New Buda. Some sought out the gathering place in Iowa merely for Hungarian companionship. Others expected to make money by speculating in land that they hoped would be granted to them free. Most expected Kossuth to join them as their governor and to organize them for a renewed revolution-

43. August P. Richter, *Geschichte der Stadt Davenport und des County Scott* (Davenport, 1917); Ferenc Pulszky, *Életem és korom* (My Life and Times), 2 vols. (Budapest, 1884), 2:97.

44. The Maythényi correspondence is reprinted in Ács, *New Buda*. See also Bogáti, *Flamingos*, 131-32, quoting *Magyar Újság*, 5 September 1876.

45. Bogáti, *Flamingos*, 116; Ács, *New Buda*, 44.

ary effort. Often their motives were contradictory. Újházi wrote long letters to Kossuth about his plans for resuming the revolution from New Buda with American aid, while at the same time referring to the peace and contentment of the wilderness where the two of them could escape from the evils of European politics. Újházi clearly entertained the contradictory romantic views that a utopian state could be carved out of the primeval wilderness, while the customs, language, and traditions of the Old World gentry could be preserved, somehow stripped of their faults, yet operating under American republican principles.⁴⁶

Eventually, Újházi's companions became his most vociferous critics. When their lives turned sour, when their hopes went unfulfilled, and most important, when the promised coming of their leader, Kossuth, did not materialize, Újházi became the scapegoat for their complaints. Reversing his earlier encouragement of Újházi's actions, Kossuth by mid-1851 openly condemned the old revolutionary for his willingness to live in the isolated wilderness and thereby give up on the revolution.⁴⁷ Also critical of Újházi was a faction of the Hungarians who accused him of misappropriating collected funds for his own personal use at New Buda.⁴⁸ Others condemned him for attempting to duplicate the life-style of the Hungarian aristocracy at New Buda. "Újházi plays a Dionysus role there," wrote one of the émigrés; "he wants to transplant the Hungarian aristocratic manner of behavior to the West."⁴⁹

In his promotion of the colony to his compatriots, Újházi did seem to promise the traditional Hungarian gentry life, yet

46. Kissing the ground of New Buda upon his arrival, Újházi wrote to his son, "at last my spirit is content in this endless, quiet isolation, far from the selfishness and evil of mankind, who have given me much reason to detest them." Kende, *Hungarians*, 1:143.

47. Kossuth to Újházi, 21 May 1851, cited in Vassady, "Kossuth and Újházi," 31.

48. During the early months of 1850 in New York, many of the Hungarians wished to use collected funds for purposes other than Újházi's colonization plan and broke with their leader, thereafter poisoning the views of other newcomers against him. See Vassady, "Kossuth and Újházi," 26.

49. Tivadar Ács, *A számfűzötték: Fiala János 1848-49-i hőnvédalezredes emlékiratai az emigrációból* (The Exiles: The Emigration Memoirs of John Fiala, a Lieutenant-Colonel of the 1848-49 Revolution) (n.p., n.d.), 214.

he and many of his companions proudly eschewed any semblance of aristocratic titles or practices. Újházi changed the aristocratic *y* to *i* at the end of his name, and Maythényi publicly renounced his titles and privileges when he took the oath of citizenship. And when it was still assumed that Kossuth would be joining them as the governor of New Buda, Újházi explicitly requested his leader to avoid distributing land on the basis of status or rank, and to stick with the congressional system of individual preemption.⁵⁰

At the same time, however, many of these "gentlemen farmers" took steps to mitigate the harsh and isolated homesteading life-style. Újházi himself built a relatively large log house that locals referred to as a "log castle" (in fact, it was no more than an oversized log cabin).⁵¹ Varga's home, unequaled in Decatur County, was known in the neighborhood as the "big house," and a visiting Hungarian described Varga as a "true European" because he "spent half of his fortune on his comfort" at his New Buda farm.⁵²

At first the settlers made heroic efforts to do their own domestic chores, but soon many complained bitterly about the lack of availability of servants in America, "where men work for themselves instead of others." Újházi himself encouraged one of his friends to bring a servant with him, although he did not employ any himself. Maythényi urged his wife to bring one or two female servants from home because she would not be able to find any in Iowa.⁵³

50. On two previous occasions when Hungarian émigré colonies had been planned, once by Kossuth in Turkey and another time by Col. János Prágay in Texas, it was proposed that land be divided on the basis of military and social rank. See Vassady, "Kossuth and Újházi," 28, 43.

51. As described by a Decatur County surveyor in 1851, the house was no castle. It was a 50' by 20' log cabin, consisting of three small compartments serving as kitchen, dining room, and bedroom. *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 4 February 1852. Another source describes it as being an oversized "blockhouse" with four rooms and a kitchen. Rác Rónay, "Hungarian American Settlements," 8-9. Also see Wilson, "Hungarian Patriots," 515.

52. Maythényi to his wife, 4 December 1851, in Ács, *New Buda*, 207; Xantus, *Letters*, 66.

53. *Pesti Napló*, 14 December 1850, in Ács, *New Buda*, 135. Maythényi complained that American women refused to work as domestics. He recommended that female servants be brought by Hungarian settlers, but cau-

For a variety of reasons, then, by mid-1852 New Buda was in a state of decline. It had not become a center for revolutionary activity because it had not received Kossuth's blessing. Contributing further to the increasing insecurity among the settlers was the continued congressional refusal to grant their promised lands.⁵⁴ Many had come to suspect the truth: that the free land they had been promised was never forthcoming. Moreover, as single men without families accompanying them, their growing sense of isolation and loneliness was well expressed by the émigré who compared life at New Buda with exile in Siberia.⁵⁵ Gradually, the Forty-eighters began drifting to the cities to find professions better suited to their natures and abilities.

Perhaps the biggest blow came when Újházi himself decided to leave New Buda. Újházi had become extremely depressed. The death of his wife in October 1851, Kossuth's lack of support for his New Buda colony, factionalism among his companions, continued congressional inaction on the land grant question, and the severity of the Iowa winters, which he blamed for his wife's death, all contributed to his decision in 1852 to purchase property in Texas and to sell his preemption rights and improvements at New Buda to a German family. Upon his departure for Texas in 1853 he quarreled bitterly with his companions who refused to follow him.⁵⁶

tioned that they must bring only older women, because young women would be immediately snatched up as wives. Maythényi to his wife, 20 November and 4 December 1851, *ibid.*, 203-9.

54. Maythényi to his wife, 22 August 1852, *ibid.*, 261. The émigrés were aware that a series of homesteading bills in the 1850s proposing to give free land to settlers were failing to pass in the Senate because of sectional disputes. The Homestead Act of 1862, which finally passed after the southern secession, provided that any (head of family) citizen or alien intending to become one could obtain title to 160 acres if he or she lived on it and improved it for five years. This is the type of grant the Hungarians had hoped for throughout the 1850s. By 1862 it was too late to help them.

55. Vassady, "Kossuth and Újházi," 40, 46.

56. Bogáti, *Flamingos*, 170-71, 211-12; Klára Újházi Diary, 12 January, 30 November 1851, in Bogáti, *Poli*, 89, 117. The other settlers questioned the wisdom of Újházi's move and refused to follow him. Quarreling also broke out over an affair of the heart between Újházi's fifteen-year-old daughter, Ilona, and Madarász's son, Vilmos. Újházi refused to agree to their marriage, insisting that Ilona join the family in its move to Texas. Madarász, Varga, and

Thereafter, Újházi became a convenient scapegoat for New Buda's earlier failures. He was criticized for keeping for himself funds collected to aid the Hungarians, and accused of speculating in land at the expense of his compatriots. The Hungarian naturalist János Xantus, a visitor to New Buda in 1854-55 who was prone to exaggerations, was allegedly told of Újházi's "indolence and rapacity" in using the Hungarian land "to exploit and profiteer" at his companions' expense, instead of using it to unite them. Xantus claimed that Újházi offered his New Buda house plots at exorbitant prices to newcomers, forcing other Hungarians to mark off a new town site with more reasonable inducements for settlement.⁵⁷ While it is not out of the question that Újházi, like his companions, was stricken by the fever of speculation, it is certain that during the two years under his command the New Buda of his dreams had comprised nothing more than his log house (the post office), surrounded by the empty house plots he had laid out.

ÚJHÁZI'S DEPARTURE IN 1853 opened the way for others to promote New Buda in new ways. Instead of advertising it as a revolutionary center for Hungarians in a closed community, it was now promoted as valuable real estate with rich farm land and commercial opportunities, and as a supply base for travelers to California. A community of New Buda now came into actual existence, instigated by what amounted to highly misleading land promotion by three Hungarian real estate men: the refined and witty György Pomutz, the perfect salesman; Ernő Drahos, a young lawyer from Torontal County who had served as a captain in the revolutionary army and had been one of the early New Buda settlers in 1851; and Ferdinand Aufricht, a new arrival in 1853. These three laid out the town of New Buda by

Pomutz, Újházi's closest friends, supported the young couple's wishes. Ilona got married and remained at New Buda. At the same time, Klára, the older daughter, also received a marriage proposal, in her case from a young German settler. However, Klára placed her loyalty to her father first and went with him and her three brothers to Texas, where her suitor joined her later. Klára Újházi Diary, 14 September 1852, 29 April 1853, in Bogáti, *Poli*, 127, 141; Varga to Pauline, 7 December 1852; and Újházi to Pauline, 4 March 1853, *ibid.*, 128-37. Also see Bogáti, *Flamingos*, 127-34, 223, 225-27.

57. Xantus, *Letters*, 72; Ács, *New Buda*, 67.

measuring off sixty-acre house and farm plots and circulating maps depicting New Buda as a town with wide boulevards, schools, churches, parks, and other amenities, many with Hungarian place names. The degree of their success was illustrated by an Iowa history book published in 1876—ironically, at a time when New Buda was turning into a ghost town—describing it as a thriving village where “one of the streets is denominated Magyar street, and the centre of the town is known as Kossuth Square.”⁵⁸

The mid-1850s were years of development and growth for New Buda. There were estimates of as many as seventy to eighty settlers living in and around the town between 1853 and 1858, though these numbers fluctuated.⁵⁹ With his usual proclivity toward exaggeration, Xantus described New Buda as consisting of eight white-washed frame houses located on the west bank of the Grand River. Újházi's old house was still serving as the post office under the management of the German to whom he had sold his properties. In 1854 the post office handled 950 letters and 7,000 newspapers—an astonishing volume for a town of eight houses. Tradesmen occupying the town included a saddle maker, a blacksmith, a cabinetmaker, a pharmacist, and two leather-goods merchants bartering with about three hundred Indians encamped nearby. A combined grocery and general store was run cooperatively by a group of Hungarian farmers who took turns managing it. Xantus explained that New Buda served a large number of surrounding farms as well as immigrants in transit to California. Within a ten-mile radius of the town he also reported a thriving brewery and two steam- and four water-driven mills in full operation.⁶⁰

58. See Xantus, *Letters*, 66-67; Howell and Smith, *Decatur County*, 1:52; Varga, *Notations*, 14; Kende, *Hungarians*, 1:157, 342; Bogáti, *Flamingos*, 257; Charles R. Tuttle and Daniel Durrie, *An Illustrated History of the State of Iowa* (Chicago, 1876), 483. According to one report, Drahos laid out the town in November 1855 about one-half mile from the river on the west bank. See Howell and Smith, *Decatur County*, 1:181. It is at this location that New Buda appears on subsequent maps of Decatur County.

59. Rácz-Rónay, “Hungarian-American Settlements,” 9.

60. Xantus, *Letters*, 68, 71-72; Ács, *New Buda*, 67-68; Kende, *Hungarians*, 1:157.

According to Xantus, not a parcel of free land remained available in this region which had been virtually empty five years earlier. The log block houses had been replaced by sturdy brick and board farmhouses. The town and surrounding farms remained dominated by Hungarians, but Germans and Yankees were mixed with them in good numbers. Xantus described his friends' farms—those of Madarász, Maythényi, and Varga—as large, comfortable, and prosperous. They bore interesting Hungarian names, such as “Hungarian Spring” (Madarász), “Pipelighter” (Maythényi), and “New Arad” (Varga), and were designated as such on the local maps of the time. Xantus calculated that Varga had increased his initial investment by 500 percent within a three-year period due to appreciating property values.⁶¹

This prosperity was short-lived, however. The amicable relations that had developed among the Hungarians and between them and their neighbors during New Buda's short period of growth began to break down again after 1856. Pomutz and Drahos had induced large numbers of German immigrants to buy house and farm plots based on an imaginary town laid out on unofficially preempted lands that they did not own but had simply staked out in the hope of receiving it free in the future. Their misleading real estate practices disturbed the entire community and greatly distressed the other Hungarian settlers.⁶² Xantus, who got caught up in the speculative fever of his companions, added to the feuding among the Hungarians. In 1855 and again in 1858, Xantus claimed preemptive rights to a part of Madarász's claim, leading first to public recriminations among the Hungarian settlers and later to litigation in the courts.⁶³

61. Xantus, *Letters*, 68; Bogáti, *Flamingos*, 258; Ács, *New Buda*, 65-66.

62. Arnold, *New Buda*, 7, described Pomutz as a con man, a “frenzied financier.” Likewise, Wilson, “Hungarian Patriots,” 502, wrote that Pomutz “had a decided charm of speech and manner, as many of the settlers had a good cause to remember, for he occasionally used this gift to his own advantage and to their detriment, and was consequently unpopular with his compatriots.” Also see Madarász, *Memoirs*, 305-6. According to one report, Drahos ran into conflict with the law and disappeared without a trace from the settlement. Ács, *New Buda*, 87.

63. Henry M. Madden, *Xantus: Hungarian Naturalist in the Pioneer West* (Palo Alto, CA, 1949), 41, 74-75, 166; Kende, *Hungarians*, 1:223, 332-34.

Many of the Hungarians' problems at New Buda were related to their failure to comprehend the changing effects of increasing immigrant pressures on the vast amounts of preempted unimproved acreage which they continued to hold with speculation in mind. In 1858, as part of the litigation over Xantus's claims, Pomutz explained the outdated conception of land ownership held by the Hungarians through the 1850s: "Scarcely one or two [Hungarians] done any cultivation at all, at that time, because we thought, the then existing practice of preemption [Act of 1841] will allow us to lay a foundation of 4 logs and this will save it [the land]." ⁶⁴ By late 1854, however, the pressure of new settlers forced the government to require all squatters to make affidavit that they were living upon and improving no more than 320 acres of preempted land which would be available to them at the usual rate of \$1.25 per acre. All other lands were to be released for auction on the open market. ⁶⁵ Not only were the Hungarians thereby compelled to relinquish the huge sections of excess lands they had preempted in the early 1850s, but many did not even have the money to purchase the improved lands they were permitted to retain. ⁶⁶ Several settlers departed before a reprieve arrived in January 1855 in the form of a renewed presidential order reserving from sale the vaguely delineated "township of land belonging to the Hungarians." ⁶⁷

64. Madden, *Xantus*, 40. The 1841 law stated that a squatter who staked out government land and made improvements on it had the right later to buy up to 160 acres of it for \$1.25 per acre. A person who already owned as much as 320 acres of land could not get more by preemption.

65. *Congressional Globe*, 33d Cong., 1st sess., 1854, p. 2261.

66. Bogáti, *Flamingos*, 258-59. According to one source, the Hungarians held forty thousand acres. Pál Liptay, "Új Buda," *Fővárosi Lapok* (24-25 January 1872), 93.

67. Ordered by President Pierce, 22 January 1855, and quoted in *Congressional Globe*, 35th Cong., 1st sess., 1858, p. 1930. Also see Wilson, "Hungarian Patriots," 487; Kende, *Hungarians*, 1:223; Madden, *Xantus*, 40. Not all of the Hungarians who departed from their farms in the "Hungarian Settlement" left the region. Varga, for example, moved in 1856 or 1857 to a farm in Long Creek Township near Madarász. Varga, *Notations*, 14; Howell and Smith, *Decatur County*, 2:253. For the exact location of the Madarász farm in 1875, see *Andreas' Atlas of Iowa*, 35.

While the 1855 presidential order demonstrated lingering sympathies in Washington for the New Buda Hungarians, it only served to perpetuate false hopes for three more years. In 1858 all unsold lands in Decatur County were again ordered up for auction. This time many of the settlers were shocked to discover that they did not even hold official preemption rights to lands they had improved. This confusion resulted from the informal transferring of lands from the original preemptors to newcomers on the hazy assumption, fed by two presidential orders, that the territory they occupied, known as the "Hungarian Settlement," was theirs to dispose of as they pleased.⁶⁸

For the third time in seven years, the settlers petitioned Congress for an exemption in 1858. This time they requested that the Hungarian lands in Decatur County be reserved from auction for one more year until those who were assignees and not original settlers could file proper preemption claims for their improved lands "not exceeding 160 acres." Although some congressmen protested that the bill was "peculiar" and demonstrated "favoritism," they acknowledged the false encouragement the Hungarians had received and agreed to permit all Hungarian settlers to file preemption rights with the right of purchase at \$1.25 per acre one year later. All non-Hungarian settlers, however, were to be excluded from this privilege.⁶⁹ The 1858 order, coming at a time when the full negative impact of the Panic of 1857 was being felt by Iowa speculators who had overextended themselves in a collapsing real estate market, caused more of the settlers who lacked the purchase price to depart. Only the minority who had built homes and noticeably improved their lands, and had saved enough to purchase their 160 acres, became freeholders of their homesteads one year later. All other excess lands held by the Hungarians and their assignees were auctioned off in 1859.

This 1858 event was by no means the only cause of the ensuing decline from New Buda's short-lived prosperity. The

68. Liptay, "Új Buda," 93.

69. For the Senate, see *Congressional Globe*, 35th Cong., 1st sess., 1858, p. 1914; for the House, see *ibid.*, 2036. Also see Bogáti, *Flamingos*, 260. According to Wilson, "Hungarian Patriots," 487, few, if any, of the Hungarians were able to retain more than two hundred acres.

Ausgleich of 1867, whereby Austria and Hungary were merged into a dual empire, granted mass amnesty to the Forty-eighters, opening the door for their return to their homeland. Many of them took the opportunity and returned. Others, eager to support the Union's call and to exploit their military experience, were drawn away by the Civil War. (In proportion to their total numbers in the United States, the Hungarian émigrés played a surprisingly large role in the war.) Sources list as many as nine Hungarians who left New Buda for this purpose, including Imre Dobozy, Tivadar Maythényi, István Radnich, and György Pomutz. After the war, Dobozy and Radnich returned to their New Buda farms, where they died in 1885 and 1911, respectively. Like many of the more successful participants in the war, Pomutz was rewarded with a foreign consulship and never returned to New Buda.⁷⁰

Although reports about the community of New Buda still appeared in the late 1860s, they reflected more the continued legend than reality. For example, in 1868 a Decatur County newspaper described New Buda as a thriving village of "sixteen blocks of eight lots each. There are two general stores, one blacksmith shop, one hotel and a good schoolhouse. The population is about one hundred."⁷¹ In fact, although many of the Hungarian farmers remained on their scattered farms in the vicinity, by the early 1870s the village of New Buda was in the process of disappearing altogether. In 1871 Varga left his farm

70. See Edmund Vasváry, *Lincoln's Hungarian Heroes* (Washington, DC, 1939); Ács, *New Buda*, 70-81; Howell and Smith, *Decatur County*, 2:113, 370-71.

71. Dobozy first worked as a hired hand and shoemaker at New Buda. After serving in the Iowa 10th Infantry, he returned to buy a New Buda farm and to marry a German woman named Maria Sanders (sister of Varga's German wife) with whom he had eight children. Maythényi joined the Union Army in 1861 and later returned to Hungary with his father. Radnich was a carpenter, home contractor, and successful New Buda farmer who also served in the Civil War. He returned to rise to the presidency of a bank in Davis City. Pomutz organized the 15th Iowa Infantry in 1861. He achieved the highest rank of any Decatur County soldier when he was promoted to brevet brigadier general at war's end, after which he was appointed consul to Russia. He never returned to the United States.

71. Howell and Smith, *Decatur County*, 1:181. This description also referred to a "Kossuth Square" and a "Magyar Street," so its probable source was the 1850s propaganda material distributed by the Hungarians. Also see *Annals of Iowa* 30 (1949-1951), 465; and Tuttle and Durrie, *Illustrated History*, 483.

and moved to the county seat at Leon where he served as county treasurer and a prominent judge and political figure for many decades. Others, including Hainer, Madarász, Dobozy, Radnich, László Zichy (who arrived with his family only in 1875), and Ferdinand Takács (the only remnant from among Újházi's original contingent of settlers), remained on their farms in the environs of what used to be New Buda.⁷² Although there is some evidence that New Buda's schoolhouse, built by Radnich, was still operating in the early 1870s, a visitor to the site in the middle of the decade reported finding only the white-washed remains of the buildings along with Újházi's old "log castle" post office, which was by then being used as a barn by a local farmer.⁷³

Davis City, founded nearby in 1855, eclipsed and displaced the Hungarian village in the 1870s, turning the New Buda of Újházi's dreams into a ghost town. The official end came in 1880, when Ignác Hainer, the last New Buda postmaster, made the painful recommendation to transfer the post office to Davis City.⁷⁴ With that act New Buda was permanently erased from the map of Iowa, in the same way that it had first been placed there three decades earlier.

Thus, within twenty years of its inception, the New Buda of Újházi's hopes, with its mixture of revolutionary expecta-

72. Liptay, "Új Buda," 93; Bogáti, *Flamingos*, 379-83; Howell and Smith, *Decatur County*, 2:370-71. In 1893 Varga, Madarász, Zichy, Radnich, and Hainer were reported still living in the vicinity. On the 1875 map of Decatur County, Radnich's farm is shown just outside of Davis City in Burrell Township, and Madarász's farm is in the southeastern corner of Richland Township. The 1894 map of New Buda Township locates Hainer's and Dobozy's farms very near to where the village of New Buda was still labeled on the map. *Andreas' Atlas of Iowa*, 35; and *Plat of New Buda Township*, 42. By 1912 Radnich was the sole survivor of the original Forty-eight settlers. At that time, he and the descendants of the other Hungarians, as well as their neighbors who remembered them, were interviewed by Lillian Wilson, who reported her findings in the "Hungarian Patriots" article cited frequently above.

73. Bogáti, *Flamingos*, 380-81. The 1875 county map clearly shows a square area designated as the village of New Buda. The 1894 township map, while still identifying the New Buda location, no longer shows a village. However, it does locate the New Buda School one mile to the south of New Buda. *Andreas' Atlas of Iowa*, 35; *Plat of New Buda Township*, 42.

74. Rácz-Rónay, "Hungarian-American Settlements," 9. Also see *Biographical and Historical Record*, 561.

tions, liberal principles, and gentry life-styles, had disappeared. From the beginning, it had been little more than an idealistic and utopian dream. If Kossuth had supported it in 1852, more Hungarians would have initially settled there. But given the grim hardships of frontier life, together with the Forty-eighters' romantic goals, aristocratic traditions, and complete ignorance of homesteading skills, it is unlikely that either they or Kossuth could have survived in the wilderness for very long. The short-lived community of New Buda that followed Újházi's departure appeared more pragmatic than its predecessor, but it, too, was founded on unrealistic hopes and expectations, especially as they related to the settlers' rights of land use and tenure. By 1858, when the question of land tenure was finally settled, few of the Hungarians remained, and most of the few who did soon found other options: some returned to Hungary, others participated in the Civil War, and still others moved to the cities. The very few who adapted to the region lived scattered in the environs of the original community, as the village of New Buda lapsed into a ghost town. Today, the continued existence of New Buda Township in Decatur County remains the only monument to the utopian dreams of the small band of Hungarian exiles who once dreamed, schemed, and labored there.

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